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MAY 1st, 1853.

MOZART'S MASSES.

Nos. X., XI.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

THE score of the Mass No. 10, in B flat, was obtained from the library of the Rev. Mr. Latrobe, who, by publishing selections from it in his 'Sacred Music,' gave our amateurs their first impression of the powers of Mozart as a sacred composer. The 'Dona Nobis' of this Mass and the 'Recordare' of the *Requiem* long since excited the greatest interest in the tasteful musical families in which they were introduced—a period, be it remembered, when the symphonies, quartets, operas, and other important works of the master were for the majority of hearers in England a sealed volume.

Habit had at this time so contracted the general idea of what was sacred in style, and had so much attached us in this respect to the forms of Handel and of our cathedral composers, that of the older and more bigoted hearers, some with difficulty permitted themselves to consider that as real sacred music which came before them in such attractive forms of melody and harmony. Younger hearers, however, more plastic in their taste and more sensitive to impressions, were ready converts to the charms of the new style.

And on recollection of these early days in the history of our progress this reflection arises: that the taste formed on these Masses, from an appreciation of the novelty and beauty they contained, and powerfully exhibited in their day, was capable of infinite extension. It comprehended a wide field of style, both dramatic and instrumental, and sympathised readily in those changes and innovations which, at successive stages of the art, are introduced by men of genius for the further excitement of the ear and of the imagination. The motive power of genius which first awakened taste in the hearer still influences it, creates an avidity for progress, and a desire, in any new work, to seize upon whatever of novelty or beauty may originate with its author.

Progress is indeed the life of music; but to appreciate it critically, the taste should at least be founded on a knowledge of the old Italian masters, our cathedral composers, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. In the present century, so many persons commence their acquaintance with music in the works of the modern German composers, that, from the want of a better foundation, they seem never to acquire any fixed

principles or accurate estimate of musical beauty. Our notions on this head ought not to be vague and fluctuating as the wind. We ought to be able to speak of the 'faith that is in us,' to place a finger on the chord, and give an index to the passage in which musical beauty and elegance reside. And certainly for developing the latent powers of the young, and as a school for founding a taste for the best things in vocal and orchestral music, nothing can equal Mozart's Masses. Their music is so pure and unsophisticate, they are so various and so easily accessible, that the least experience in founding a choir or orchestra will show a director their true object and destination. Years have detracted nothing from their value in this respect.

The Tenth Mass, though one of the smallest of the scores we have yet seen, being only for two violins and bass (to which Mr. Novello has added *ad libitum* parts for viole), is written with peculiar passion, and imprinted with the individuality of its author. Scarcely any symphonies or instrumental subjects introduce the voices, but both voices and instruments enter together, and the music begins at once. A simple tune is that of the Kyrie:—



yet it is so elegantly accompanied, and displayed with such variety in the voice parts, that it forms nearly the entire burden of the movement. Graceful simplicity and flowing melody give a character to this Kyrie which is not often attained in music. The absence of effort in composition is seldom so manifest, but the spontaneous melody and the smooth voice parts win every ear.

The Gloria commences with this curious succession of harmonies of the seventh—a prelude of ten bars to the real subject. The abrupt commencement on a $\frac{9}{8}$ was probably softened in performance by something previously intoned by the officiating priest:—



At 'Laudamus Te' a vigorous orchestral subject commences, and the words are dramatically expressed by the chorus. The vocal bass being independent of the instrumental, the parts have a fullness in spite of the slightly-sketched instrumental score. The melodies of the solo parts, and the modulation and effect of the *tutti*s—see, for example, the fine passage 'Suscipe deprecati-

onem'—are in Mozart's happiest manner. At the fugged point, 'Cum Sancto'—

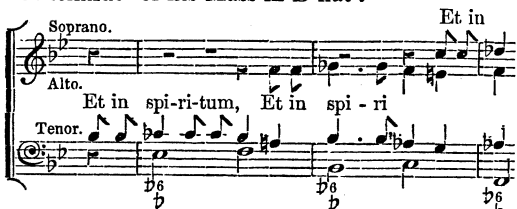


the violins accompany in a passage of energetic syncopation—



This manner of accompanying a chorus, so delightful to the ears of the musician, was peculiarly in favour with Mozart, who has used it with tragic grandeur and elevation of style in the opening chorus of his *Requiem*. It is surprising that, approaching on many occasions so near as he did to the glorious effect of a vocal fugue with florid accompaniments, he left the best examples to be given by Haydn, Hummel, and Cherubini.

The Credo, in common time, is in a fine orchestral style; the voice and violin parts are symmetrical and distinct. Changing to *Adagio*, and from B flat to the relative minor, the 'Et incarnatus' proceeds without interrupting the music. This pathetic composition is distinguished by an effect new and unusual even at this day. At the words 'sepultus est' the chorus subsides into a quartet of voices, who take up their parts on a chord of the seventh with a minor third. The effect is surprising—solemn and fine. The following passage has been adopted by Hummel in identical progressions in the 'Crucifixus' of his Mass in B flat :—



Deceived probably by memory, the bane of composers, he thought he had invented it himself. The cadence, interrupted continually by that chord of the sixth at every successive conclusion, was too good a passage to be forgotten, and we admired it in Hummel till we found cause to transfer our admiration.

The Sanctus, a short, slow, fugged movement, with independent accompaniments, is of majestic effect, and the introduction of the subject in the soprano part, and in quicker time at the 'Hosanna,' is a stroke of genius which greatly beautifies the cadence.

One of the most elegant soprano solos of the composer, differing from anything he has ever written of this kind, occurs in the 'Benedictus.' Half the interest lies in the instruments; the notes

for the voice are few, simple, and within the compass of a mezzo soprano, and yet a singer of good accent, and capable of swelling and diminishing tones, would create an impression even in these few notes. The theme is so original and graceful that it deserves to be placed before the reader :—



The triplets in the second violins communicate an effect of movement and contrast to this solo which render it far more pleasing in its original than in its arranged form.

The Agnus Dei, in G minor, is instinct with grandeur and solemnity, and recalls in those particulars the celebrated style of Mozart in the *Requiem*. Particularly remarkable are the cadences when, after the impassioned exclamation 'Miserere,' the melody is taken at 'Nobis' by the altos and tenors, while the sopranos and basses sustain holding notes. This choral effect seems to have found favour with the composer, for it is repeated in various ways so as to become a feature of the composition.

There is something fascinating in the subject of the 'Dona nobis,' a beautiful and original chorus, long since selected by Mr. Latrobe as a favorite specimen of Mozart's sacred style :—



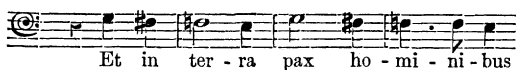
This subject is carried on at unusual length; it is diversified with modulation, solo, chorus, voices, and instruments, by turns principal or accompanying, and ends with a cadence on a pedale in the alto and bass voices. Unless we should find in it some similarity with a beautiful quintet in the *Zauberflöte*, we may search Mozart's works in vain for any double of this remarkable composition, which stands alone, and begins and ends with itself.

The style of the Tenth Mass is so distinguished, the voice parts are so well finished, while those for the violins are so loose and sketchy, that the work probably originated in some journey made by Mozart in his youth. It may have been an offering to some convent, written for a particular choir and orchestra. The new stringed parts, added by Mr. Novello for two tenors, seem in this Mass of indispensable utility to the accompaniment.

The score of the Eleventh Mass, in C, contains parts for two violins, two oboes, trumpets, drums, and bass. This work was composed at Salzburg in December, 1776, one month after the second, and three years before the first Mass, with which,

in the Gloria, it has a strong correspondence and affinity, developing, in some of its progressions, the first idea of the impassioned and dramatic style therein announced. The Kyrie, *Andante*, $\frac{3}{4}$, is a movement of melodious and simple character, vocal and flowing in the parts, abounding in contrasts of tutti and solo, and in all its phrases so agreeably instrumented and accompanied as to be welcomed with pleasure by hearers of every class. Performed by an orchestra, the effect of this music would be entirely new to those who are only acquainted with it in the organ adaptation. From the first four bars of symphony which introduce the subject, the ear is struck with the pleasing tones and symmetrical disposition of the instruments. The perpetual motion of the second violins, the trumpets marking the beginning of the bar, the oboes now in octaves above the voices, and now in holding notes, create a symphonic effect and orchestral combination so pleasing, as to carry with it a large proportion of the interest of the hearer. The voices have Mozart's sweet melody and clear parts, but the instruments have also his scientific and unequalled mode of accompaniment, which is always separate and distinct, and a florid elaboration of the first idea so artistic as to excite the earnest attention of the musician. The various and often impoverished orchestras that Mozart wrote for in early life seem to have been his best school. They taught him how to make music with small means, and thus sharpened his invention. If he has no tenor violins, he has an expedient by which they shall not be missed; if no wind instruments, he puts the voices on their duty. The ingenuity of his constructive faculty is set forth in no works more interestingly than in these Masses.

The Gloria, *Allegro*, $\frac{3}{4}$, exhibits, in the fire and energy of its character, in bold modulation and subjects of accompaniment, ideas similar in their passionate impulse to those in the Gloria of No. 1; but three years' experience enabled Mozart to improve upon them, and employ them with more judgment. The progression, for instance—



here introduced as the bass of the second phrase of the Gloria, and not very appropriately to the character of the text, we find transferred to the end and climax of the chorus in the Gloria of No. 1, giving vigour and character to the close, and an emphasis to the word 'Amen' which is at once grand and effective.

Another progression which will be at once recognised as peculiarly Mozartean, and impressed on recollection by the Gloria of No. 1, is this, which occurs in both works on the self-same words:—



This passage is more boldly introduced in No. 1, where it comes plumply on the first of the bar from the key of C, the change of key being only prefaced by E, the new dominant, for the length of one crotchet. Here the dominant chord to A minor is reached from the key of G, and the modulation is less striking. The four bars of which the phrase above quoted forms the climax are extremely elegant in the stringed orchestra. Mozart has a phrase of canon sung by soprano solo, and taken up by the alto, which he accompanies in this characteristic manner:—



Another composer would perhaps have thought the passage of canon enough for the credit of his invention or his science—by such elegant accompaniment Mozart made it completely his own.

The words of the Credo are chorally and majestically declaimed; and though by the change to F at the 'Et incarnatus,' there would seem to be a recollection which the composer improved by going suddenly out of the key and then commencing his *Adagio*, instead of making a formal close as he has done here, there is little in the two works to provoke comparison—the Credo of No. 1 standing amidst all Masses ever written unapproached in grandeur. Many solos, accompaniments, and modulations in this No. 11 show that Mozart cast a retrospective glance at it in his later work.

Though the Sanctus is an *Adagio* of only six bars length, it concentrates the expression of the text with energy and grandeur. Never was there such a composer of a short *Adagio* as Mozart. We do not wonder so much at his long introductions as that he could *warm to his work*, as the expression is, so instantaneously. The 'Pleni sunt Cœli' is still majestic, though in quicker time than the Sanctus, and the Hosanna is new in its effects, the tenor and soprano sometimes singing in octaves. The Benedictus, for four solo voices, with organ obligato and accompanying stringed instruments, is beautiful, and reminds us that we have never heard the numerous Sonatas for the organ and violins (Epistle Sonatas)—little ecclesiastical symphonies which the composer wrote for Salzburg Cathedral. The Agnus and Dona nobis both do honor to the genius of Mozart in his twentieth year.

To be continued.